Christmas Season In the Balkans

Strange Yuletide Customs Handed Down From Times of Prehistoric Paganism—Supernatural Creatures That Roam About at Christmastide.

For Christmas customs that are really weird and strange one must go to the Balkans—that unrestful area of southwestern Europe which at the present time is a fighting ground of all the nations. And the reason why is that the customs in question have been handed down from an ancient paganism.

It is true that in all countries the rites and observances by which Christmas is celebrated are largely of heathen origin (as illustrated by the Santa Claus myth and other matters associated with tree-worship, etc.), but in the Balkans the survival of pagan belief and ceremonial, dating back far in the prehistoric past, is extraordinarily manifest.

Take for example the "karkalanza"—those mysterious beings whose existence is fully credited all over the Balkans. People in Thesaly, Thrace, Macedonia, Albania and Bulgaria speak of them in awed whispers. The Turks believe in them. They are as much an accepted fact as any of the ordinary phenomena of nature.

These supernatural creatures, possessed of attributes truly diabolical, restrict their unpleasant activities to the period from Christmas to Epiphany—twelve days. Apparently they are of nocturnal habit, for nobody ever met one of them in the daytime; but to encounter them in the dark is said to be exceedingly dangerous.

The "karkalanza" are demons pure and simple. They arrive on Christmas eve, and, during the brief period of their stay, prowl about from nightfall to cockcrow. Especially do they haunt the springs from which drinking-water is obtained, with a view to defiling them. But finally they are driven away by the blessing of the water at Epiphany.

In the meantime, as a means of mitigating their mischief, resort is had to a curious sort of mumming—though why the latter should be imagined to be efficacious for the purpose it is hard to say. For twelve days, beginning with Christmas, bands of young men, masked or otherwise disguised, and known as "Hgutshirl," wander about from village to village, giving open-air performances of a species of play.

There are seven essential characters—a bride, a bridegroom, an old man, an old woman (who nurses a puppet that represents a child), a doctor, and two men dressed in skins who are supposed to be bears or wolves, or sometimes devils. These last wear masks, and are loaded with rows on rows of sheep-bells or mule-bells, to make a noise when they dance. The old man is a low-comedy character, fantastically dressed.

According to the plot of the play, which is presumably very ancient, the old man annoys the bride with his attentions. Naturally, the bridegroom intervenes, and a quarrel follows, resulting in the death of the old man. He is mourned by the old woman, and the doctor, being called in, treats the corpse so skillfully that it is restored to life. The performance ends with a general dance of all the characters and the passing around of a hat.

There are, however, variations. Sometimes the quarrel results from an attempt by the old man to steal the baby; or it may be that the bridegroom is killed. There may be a greater number of actors in the play; but in that case the additional ones are duplicates of the necessary seven, or of some of them. The bride is a young man in a girl's dress; the old woman is a man in female costume. No woman ever takes part in these performances; such a thing would be deemed most improper.

In Rumania, on Christmas eve, a large candle is stuck in a jar of wheat and set high on the east side of the room. When the family is assembled before it, the father offers a prayer for the health and prosperity of the household, and asks a blessing on all the creatures of the home farm, and for the crops that they may flourish and yield their best. Meanwhile the housewife has made a great number of ritual cakes of various prescribed shapes and sizes, one for each member of the family, and also for the sheep, horses and other animals.

Among the Serbians in ancient days each household had its own family god. When the Serbs became Christians, they baptized the domestic divinity and bestowed upon him the name of one saint or another. Thus he became the patron saint of the family—known as the "Slava." In every Serb house his portrait hangs on the wall, painted on a golden background in Byzantine style, or carved flatly in wood, or perhaps a cheap lithograph. Before it is suspended a small oil lamp, which is lighted Christmas eve.

On the day before Christmas the whole house is thoroughly cleaned and liberally decorated with ivy. As a further preparation for celebrating the holy day, the mother of the family makes two big cakes. One of them is circular in shape and is called "Suntae," meaning the sun. The other has the form of a crescent, and is called "Myseets," the moon. Sometimes there are other little cakes representing the Pletadea. Doubtless these are of very ancient origin, and the supposition is that they owe their derivation to a prehistoric worship of the heavenly bodies.

The Yule log in Serbia is an object of household worship, being cut (in the woods) and hanled with much quasi-religious ceremonial. It is baptized with wine and annointed with oil or "fed" with honey. No woman is allowed under any circumstances to touch it. It sancitifies the hearth and the whole house. When it has been burned, the charred remains are used as medicine for man and beast; scraps of it are attached to fruit trees, to make them bear, and the ashes are sprinkled on cabbages to protect them from insects.

It is manifest that the log was originally and very anciently an idol. The rites connected with it are supposed to be a modification of the worship of a pagan god called Daybog. The ancestors of the modern Serbs sacrificed pigs to Daybog; and in these modern times of Christmas day roast pig is the great feast dish in every Serbian house. Usually it is cooked out of doors, and, when it is put on the fire, the men and boys of the family salute it by firing off pistols and guns.

Soon after daybreak on Christmas day arrives the "Polaznik"—a designation which may be translated as "the comer." He is a young boy, usually from a near-by village. When the door is opened to him, he cries "Christ is born!"—and, entering, throws handfuls of wheat about. Every one answers, "He is born in truth." Then the "comer" goes to the hearth, and with a shovel strikes showers of spark from the Yule log, saying, "May you have during the year as many cattle, horses, sheep, hogs and goats as there are sparks."

Among the Viache—an ancient people widely scattered over the Central Balkans—a big fire is made in each house on Christmas eve, to keep Christ warm. The ashes are not swept out of the hearth until Epiphany, and meanwhile the fire must not be allowed to go out. Boys go round and knock at door after door with a stick, in response to which gifts of cakes and nuts are bestowed upon them. Their leader carries at his waist a long string, on which he threads the cakes—the latter being shaped like doughnuts, with holes through the middle. The family Christmas cake is a huge affair, decorted with currants and seasame seeds. After being sprinkled with a few drops of holy water, it is broken into pieces and given to the sheep, horses and other domestic animals, to keep them in good health.

Among the Greeks and Bulgars Christmas is a holy day, but not a holiday. Accordingly, New Year's takes its place as an occasion for frolics, family rejoicings and the giving of gifts. The father of each family, however poor, must give to his wife and to each of his children a sum of money. The children's money, in a peasant household, is put in an earthen jar and kept, so that when they are grown up there will be a snug bit of capital to help start them in life.

In the well-to-do classes every man is expected to call on all the ladies of his acquaintance, and in each instance he must bring a gift. On his departure he finds the household servants all drawn up in a row, and to each of them he gives money. This is repeated at every house he visits, so that the tax on his purse is likely to be not inconsiderable. But he cannot fail to call upon any woman friend without risking the loss of her friendship and that of her family as a penalty.

On returning from church, the head of the family breaks a pomegranite on the floor, to insure the good fortune and health of the household for the coming year. There is a feast of nuts, candied fruits, figs and dates; and some of the nutshells are thrown into the corners to blind the evil one. At night a big cake, in which two coins of gold, silver or copper have been baked, is cut in slices, one for each person. Those who get the coins are crowned king and queen. The girls put bits of their cake under their pillows that night, in order that in dreams they may see their future husbands.—Hartford Times.

CENSUS REPORTS SHOW GROWTH IN MANY BRANCHES

The nature and extent of some of the changes that have taken place in the United States during the last century, says the New York World, are brought out in a striking manner by a comparison of the census reports of a hundred years ago with those of recent years. The first census of manufacturing industries ever taken in the United States or any other country was made in 1810, and the latest American census of such industries was that of 1915; each covered the operations of manufacturing establishments during the preceding year.

From 1809 the total value of manufactured products reported for the entire country was $128,000,000; but the data were known to be far from complete. The compiler estimated the true value at approximately $173,000,000. A century later the manufacturers of the country turned out products worth $20,672,000,000—about 120 times the estimate for 1809, and five years afterward, in 1914, the value of the output approximated 140 times the 1809 total.

The manufacturers of 1809 were carried on largely in homes and in small shops on farms and plantations. This was especially true of the textile industries. According to the 1809 report, about 16,000,000 yards of cotton goods, 21,200,000 yards of flaxen cloths, and 9,500,000 yards of woolen cloth were of home manufacture; and 22,100,000 yards of "blended and unnamed cloths and stuffs," mostly of home manufacture, are also shown.

Cotton and Wool.

The report is far from complete in respect to the output of cotton and woolen manufacturing establishments, only 147,000 yards being shown for the former and 71,000 yards for the latter. The total value of "all kinds of cloths and stuffs" is given as $38,800,000. In 1914 practically all the textile goods made were produced in factories, and their value amounted to $1,696,000,000.

During the hundred years in which the value of products manufactured annually in the United States was multiplied by 120, the population of the country increased from about 7,250,000 to nearly 92,000,000.

A comparison of the earlier censuses with the later throws some light on the extent to which the relations between the federal government and the people have become closer with the growth of the country. In 1790, when the first census was taken, Uncle Sam was concerned chiefly in ascertaining first the total population of each state and of its counties and towns in order that representation in congress might be apportioned accordingly as provided by the constitution, and, second, the potential military strength of the states and of the country as a whole.

With these ends in view, census-takers were directed to return the names of heads of families and the numbers of free white males sixteen years old and over, free white males under sixteen, free white females, all other free persons, and slaves. In 1800 the inquiry was made in more detail in regard to age, but in other respects its scope remained the same.

In 1810 the first census of manufacturers was taken. In 1820 the population inquiry was amplified to show the number of unnaturalized foreigners in the country. In 1840 school attendance and illiteracy were included in the population census, and the first census of agriculture was taken. And thereafter from decade to decade the field covered by the decennial census was enlarged until in 1910 the population schedule carried 30 inquiries; the general agricultural schedule 59 inquiries, the sub-divisions of which numbered 560, and the general schedules used for manufacturers and for mines and quarries, 50 inquiries each.

In addition, numerous special schedules were used for various lines of manufacturing and mining industry.

NEW RECORDS FOR TALKING MACHINE

The unusual enthusiasm created by the Columbia recording of Lazaro, the tenor seems to forecast an American conquest even greater than the European conquests of this remarkable vocal phenomenon. It is difficult to say which of Lazaro's recordings is the best, but surely "Spirto Gentil," just announced by the Columbia Company, is not the least beautiful of them. The opening theme, symbolic of the relinquishment of the human for the divine, is sung with infinite pathos and sweetness. Pulsing harp arpeggios eloquently tell of the throbbing, grief-stricken heart of Ferdinand, whose love for the faithless Leonora pleads against renunciation. The final evanescent dimuendo is a masterpiece of soulful expression—the solemn hushed tones of Lazaro's voice truly reflecting the poignant grief of a great heart that has loved in vain.

Included among late Columbia recordings is Grieg's "Bridal Procession." Prince's Orchestra, always at its best in descriptive melody, plays the capricious melody with full appreciation of the story it tells. There are humorous passages, denoting the gay repartee of the bridal party, and vivacious themes suggesting the pretty grace of the Norwegian dance. The "Bridal Procession" is a pleasing example of the delightful romanticism that characterizes the compositions of Grieg.

Cupid has formed a trust of his own down in Kentucky and has corralled all the girls—so at least a late Columbia recording, "Oh Southern City (Send Us Some Beautiful Girls)" would indicate. To hear M. J. O'Connell singing this desperate appeal to Tennessee for Southern beauties is to hear a tenor distress that would melt the heart of Alaska—were it not so laughable.

One of the best one-steps ever put in record form by Columbia is the Harry Von Tilzer One-Step Medley, "Sometimes You Get a Good One and Sometimes You Don't." The melodies of two Broadway songhits, "This Great Big World Owes Me a Loving" and "Brutus Caesar Anthony Lee' are introduced. Tere is a one-step for the dancers who revel in ragtime syncopation.

A splendid antidote for melancholia is a recording of the "Jolly Coppersmith," just released by the Columbia Graphophone company. The jovial, free-hearted song of the village coppersmith to the accompaniment of his ringing anvil, intermingling with the orchestra instruments produces a most brilliant effect. Prince's Orchestra plays and sings the selection with rollicking good cheer, plus its usual skill.

Lucy Gates, assisted by a male chorus, has recorded another coloratura gem of song from her varied repertoire for the Columbia Company—the Italian Street Song from "Naughty Marietta." One could not expect anything but a very piquant song, after the flourish of a tambourine has enlivened the introduction. And the versatile "Maude Adams of Grand Opera" does not disappoint her audience. The deeper voices of the male chorus prove a pleasing foil for the lyrical purity of Miss Gates' soprano.

Temperature a Factor In Making Good Butter

Oftentimes we hear a buttermaker say, "I had good luck with my butter to-day," and often enough it is nothing but good luck when the butter does come properly. However, there are buttermakers that always seem to have "good luck." When the source of that person's success is analyzed, it will be found almost without exception that a good dairy thermometer is responsible for a considerable part of it.

It is absolutely impossible to make a uniform quality of butter without a guide as to temperature and the sooner the buttermaking public find it out, the better it will be for all concerned.

To begin with the quality of the butter does not depend entirely upon the churning process. The quality of the cream that goes into the churn is going to help determine the quality of butter that will come out. One of the important factors in producing good cream is the temperature at which it is held. Cream never should be stored at a temperature higher than 50 degrees. Lower than that is better. If the cream is held at a higher temperature, indesirable bacterical action will take place and we will have had flavors in the butter.

Again we know that butter from "ripened" cream will be better flavored and that we will lose less fat in the butter milk when such cream is churned. To properly ripen cream we must sour it at the right temperature which is 70 degrees. The souring process is brought about by the growing of certain desirable bacteria, and these bacteria will only do well at 70 degrees. If our temperature runs much above or below that, other types of bacteria will develop and spoil the flavor of the cream.

When we come to the churning process our old friend, the thermometer, is again called into use. If the cream is too warm the butter will come soft; if the cream is put into the churn too cold, it will take a long time for the butter to come, and it will be too hard when it does come. The proper temperature for churning will vary from 52 degrees in the summer to 62 degrees in the winter. The proper method is to bring the temperature to a certain degree, say for example, 60 degrees, and churn. If the butter comes soft and hard to handle, lower the temperature of the cream a few degrees the next time, say to 57 or 58 degrees. After a few trials anyone will be able to churn butter that will come firm and in small granules and still have come in a reasonable time. The mark on many dairy thermometers that says "churning 62 degrees" is misleading. Under certain conditions this temperature may be used, but more often a colder temperature is called for. Only by checking the temperature carefully each time can we be sure of getting butter to come in good condition.

Another place to use the thermometer to advantage is in noting the temperature of the wash water used for washing the butter. Cold water from the well will often be about right but it cannot always he relied upon. The wash water should be about the same temperature as the buttermilk or a few degrees colder. To make the best butter the variation in temperature of wash water should not be more than four or five degrees from the temperature of the buttermilk, and usually the variation should be below rather than above the buttermilk temperature.

"AMBULANCE CHASING."

A point upon which the layman falls foul of lawyers is the offense which, in legal parlance, is known as barratry, but which, because of its most characteristic modern manifestation, is usually called "ambulance chasing." Speaking broadly, this signifies soliciting business or even artificially stimulating it. Every profession has its prostitutes, but the law seems to have attracted an unusual quota. The "ambulance chaser" plays like a harpy upon the miseries of mankind. There are large firms, organized for this particular purpose, that do an enormous business. They have their "cappers" and "runners"—agents, frequently secret ones, whose business it is to inform them of possible clients. Policemen thus receive commissions for reporting accidents; physicians, nurses, and hospital attendants turn an occasianal penny, and clerks in offices scan the obituary columns and death notices. An injured man has hardly recovered from the anesthetic when the accident lawyer hands him a document, with the injunction: "Sign here"—this paper places his claims for damages in the control of a particular firm, with an agreement as to the division of the award. Such agents get on the trail of newly made widows, seldom waiting, competition is so keen, for the conclusion of the funeral. Other rakers of legal offal manifest the sam tendency in different ways. In every community there are lawyers who painfully go over titles to property, in the hope of discovering flaws that will give an excuse for a litigation. There are others who read the newspapers line by line, seeking editorial slips that will form a basis for libel suits. Others, by devious ways, specialize in discovering seamy episodes in the lives of rich men—an activity from which thousands of divorce suits and breach of promise cases develop every year.—Burton J. Hendrick in "How Should a Lawyer Behave?" in the World's Work for January.

BAN JEWELRY IMPORTS.

London, Dec. 29—Importation of jewelry of any description, except by special license, has now been prohibited by the British government. Other goods prohibited are: gold, manufactured or unmanufactured, including gold coin and articles consisting partly of or containing gold. All manufacturers of silver other than silver watches and silver watch cases.

TO GIVE BONUS

The Electric Cable Co. has announced that for all wages earned by its employes from Dec. 15 last until March 15, 1917, a bonus of ten per cent. will be paid, and the same will be done on each quarter thereafter. The bonus is designed to keep the men from quitting jobs and to give them incentive to turn out better work.